(*Preliminary Draft: Not to be Reprinted or Quoted*)

THE JERUSALEM MEETING
of the
INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL
March 24—April 8, 1928

I.

The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems

3. CHRISTIANITY AND CONFUCIANISM

Reverend John Leighton Stuart, D.D.

SPENCE LIBRARY
Union Theological Seminary
RICHMOND, VA.

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL
New York City: 419 Fourth Avenue
London: 2 Eaton Gate, S. W. 1

Price, 25 Cents or 1 s

OJ
60
S931

ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Note	3
Foreword	5
I. The Approach	7
II. The Man Confucius and his Age	10
III. The Effects of the Life and Teaching of Confucius on Chinese Character	13
IV. Confucianism as a Religion	17
V. Ancestor Worship and Worship of Confucius	19
VI. Confucianists' Difficulties in their Approach to Christianity	21
VII. Points of Contact	22
VIII. The Heart of the Matter	25

NOTE

THE mission of the Christian Church in the world stands or falls with the conviction that the revelation of God in Christ is something unique, possessing supreme value and providing a real and satisfying answer to the problem of the meaning and purpose of life and a complete response to the needs of men everywhere. The question of the message with which the Church has been entrusted, and of the contribution which it may bring to the lives of those who have not yet heard or heeded it, touches the heart of the missionary movement. To meet the perplexities on this subject which are found to-day both in Western Christendom and in the rising Churches abroad, especially among the younger generation, a fresh inquiry and statement regarding the distinctive character of the Christian message in relation to non-Christian systems is urgently needed.

To afford the help that is wanted such an inquiry must not remain within the region of merely intellectual argument and definition. It must penetrate into the deeper regions of the things by which men live. "The strength of Christianity," it has been well said, "consists in its being primarily not a view, but a life, a spiritual, religious life, requiring, implying definite doctrine concerning God and man and their relations to each other, but never exhausted by these doctrines in their collectivity, inexhaustible though these in their turn are by their union with the life of the spirit, their origin and end." It is in regard to the vital forces of religion that a clearer and deeper understanding is needed.

Adequate statements on this subject would have to include the results of all the study that has been devoted to the non-Christian religions and of all the experience and thought of Christendom through the centuries. It is obvious that the Jerusalem Meeting can make but a small addition to this rich store of experience and knowledge. But fresh inquiry may provide a stimulus to the thinking of individuals and groups in the present generation, and thereby deepen that living sense of the wealth of the Christian inheritance which must always be the mainspring and inspiration of missionary endeavor, and which constitutes the most compelling call to missionary service.

Arrangements have been made for the preparation of statements setting forth the relation of Christianity to Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islâm, and Secular Civilization. This is one of these statements.

It is proposed that a large part of the time of the Meeting at Jerusalem should be given to a review of the statements, in the hope that as a result of the interchange of thought and experience they may be subsequently issued in a revised and expanded form, as an aid to a better understanding of the vital elements in the non-Christian religions and of the depth and richness of the Christian conception of life and as a guide and stimulus to further thought and study.

FOREWORD

THE following pages have been prepared during absence from China and in the midst of preoccupation with other duties which would have made impossible any special study of the subject. The writer is very much indebted to his friend of many years, Dr. D. Willard Lyon, for the material found in the manuscript of his "Confucianism To-day" and for quotations patiently collected from a number of Chinese and Western sources, both of which have been freely drawn upon. Acknowledgment of such references in detail has purposely not been made in an effort to avoid diverting attention from the main current of thought. For the rest this paper is in the main a record of impressions slowly formed through association with Chinese friends, particularly those who have become Christians while retaining in their attitudes and character the beneficial effects of Confucian teaching. His own appreciation of this Way of Life has but strengthened his consciousness of the universal reality of Religion and his confidence that Jesus Christ not only manifests this supremely but is becoming the surest, possibly the only, guaranty that the abiding values in other great religions will not hereafter perish from the earth. Mankind in many parts of the world appears to be dividing into those who worship the God revealed by Jesus and those who deny or ignore His existence. Thus conceived each one of them has its useful contribution toward a better understanding of the Truth He made incarnate; and the people it has hitherto guided and sustained need now more than ever before, because of new world-contacts, the inclusive outlook and vitalizing power that should be born of faith in Him.

J. L. S.

I. THE APPROACH

THIS is a paper written in preparation for a world-wide conference on Christian missions to be held early in the second quarter of the twentieth century. It is therefore intensely practical in its content and purpose. It is concerned only with the reasons for or against the continuance of missionary efforts in China. These have now been in process for 120 years. Judged by conventional standards of tangible results their effectiveness has been seriously questioned. Some of the assumptions which underlay the original urge to such efforts are now seen to be crude and obsolete. New and ever-improving methods of communication have enabled Chinese in large numbers to travel or study abroad and to read, even in the remotest villages of their own land, books and periodicals that convey knowledge on every subject felt to be of value. They are able, therefore, without assistance from others to appropriate from Western experience or discovery whatever they desire, including the teachings of the Christian religion and their application to life. They are making trenchant criticisms of our civilization as they observe it, and they contrast its dominant features with those of their own in comments that open even our eyes to the hitherto unrealized evils of the one and the perhaps still less clearly apprehended excellencies of the other. Not only so, but many of them attribute the futilities or false emphases of Western culture in large measure to the influence of Christianity, and when these faults are explained as due to historical causes or to those inherent in human organization, they remain convinced that the religious beliefs which produced such effects or have at least failed to prevent them are undesirable for a people with such a tradition as theirs. Comparisons not unfavorable to Confucian China are by no means confined to its own keen-minded observers. Increasing knowledge of foreign lands and other liberalizing tendencies have persuaded some Christians in the West that it is only a bigoted impertinence that would force our faith upon a people with such a civilization as the Chinese possess. Especially have the effects on organized missionary activity of recent political and military disturbances in China led many supporters of "foreign missions" to doubt, if not to disapprove, any plea for their continued maintenance. Entirely apart from any inquiry as to the relative merits of the two systems, many Chinese qualified to judge are of the opinion that Western Christianity is itself moribund, having been discredited by scientific progress in its own territory and having succumbed to the allurements of capitalistic support in a materialized society, but chiefly because the premises on which its validity and vitality depend are regarded as no longer tenable. Has, therefore, the Christian Church in the present age a message for a

nation sustained through many centuries by Confucian culture and eager now, as well as competent, to reinforce that culture with modern scientific achievement? And granted that there is a message, is there any longer for those of other nations the obligation, or even the opportunity, to maintain missionary activities on Chinese soil? The answer attempted in the following paragraphs to such questionings as these is not intended as a defense of the missionary enterprise in China either in its theory or in its actual working out. Still less do they contain an argument aimed at awakening or renewing in us of the West a sense of our duty, or establishing in the Chinese consciousness a sense of our right, to continue this enterprise. Nor does this paper undertake any comprehensive treatment of Confucianism in its historical or philosophical aspects. There is an ample and easily accessible literature on the subject. This is scarcely more than the personal convictions simply told of one who, as a missionary and the son of missionaries, has lived the larger part of his life among the Chinese people with an ever-deepening appreciation of the values in their ancient heritage and esteem for many individuals among them as well as for the nation itself, and who has by this process discovered such new beauty and fresh power in the religion of Jesus as for him would perhaps not have been otherwise possible. Such a transcript from life is of interest only as typical of a common experience shared by an increasing number of Western and Chinese Christians. Confucianism thus regarded is a convenient term for that complex of moral and cultural forces which has made the Chinese what they are to-day. One can best understand it by attempting to abstract the distinctive qualities of Chinese life as it has actually been flowing on down to the present, its hopes and fears, its incentives to noble conduct and its inhibitions, its ethical dynamic and its religious implications. So profoundly have the personality and teachings of Confucius permeated the life of the race that the history of China has been the continuous flowering out of the Confucian doctrine. Much that is peculiar to this civilization can become intelligible only by the study of the sage and his followers through successive periods of controversy and reform, revival and stagnation. In the light of this mellowed contribution to the thought and experience of humanity, elements that have been accepted as an integral part of the Christian faith slough off as accretions due to Greek philosophy or Roman law, to the accident of European happenings, or to the American instinct for visible achievement, whereas the abiding and universal elements in the religion of Jesus are given fresh meaning and value. In attempting humbly to share the Christian Gospel with a people among whom the Confucian ideals have ripened, we of the West may expect that this effort will accentuate our own sense of its surpassing significance while enabling us to discard irrelevancies or rectify inconsistencies

that obscure it for them as they will for future generations in the West. In short, the determination to mediate the Gospel of Christ to the people of China ought to result not in destroying for them but in fulfilling the noblest aspirations of Confucian teaching and in supplementing these with its own unique and essential features, while bringing to ourselves the corrective influences it can exert upon the defects of our civilization and a broader, better-balanced understanding of our own religious faith.

II. THE MAN CONFUCIUS AND HIS AGE

CONFUCIUS lived in a period of political disintegration and intellectual uncertainty. It was natural that with his training for government service he was primarily concerned with social and political reform. He traveled patiently from one to another of the independent states into which the even then ancient attempt at unifying China under the Chóu Dynasty had dissolved, hoping to find a prince who would listen to his counsels and allow him to apply his theories. When sixty-eight years old he ceased these efforts and devoted the rest of his life to his growing school of devoted disciples and to literary activity as the twofold vehicle for perpetuating the task to which he had dedicated his life. In an age of moral decadence and economic distress, of civil strife and social maladjustments, he searched the recorded experience of the race for any knowledge that would point the way toward regaining the happier conditions when kings ruled with justice and mercy and an obedient people lived in contented comfort, when government officers were faithful in their duties and the laws were observed by citizens educated to understand reciprocal obligations, when fathers were fatherly and sons were filial, and all men tried to live in harmony with one another and with Heaven's Will. But this ideal society could come again into being only where correct principles were understood. There must be intellectual certainty in order that there may be morality and harmonious living; hence the supreme importance of learning for the leaders. Self-discipline through study produces character and this fits each one for his function in the family, society, or the State. Virtue in the rulers awakens like conduct in their subjects. Out of long experience the family had become the social unit and the pattern for the successive enlargements of corporate existence into district, province, and Kingdom. Despite the breakdown of paternal feudalism in his own age, Confucius believed that society thus organized under moralized leadership and with mutual relationships properly maintained by all would bring about the sorely needed reforms. To the advocacy of such principles in the hope of social and political reformation he gave himself with a singleness of aim, a consistency of teaching and of practice, a thoroughness of historical scholarship, a clarity of insight, a steadfast hopefulness in spite of apparent failure, and a richly human warmth of feeling which won the admiring affection of a constantly-increasing band of contemporary followers, transmitted by them to successive generations for nearly 2500 years. This attachment to his person lingers on. Not only has he been continuously the model for imitation to all educated Chinese but even now their modern scholars, who have become dissatisfied with much in his system of social ethics, seldom lose the glad sense of allegiance to the man.

This magnetic influence of a single personality through so long a period in the history of so vast a population is an arresting phenomenon. It is not only a tribute to the character of Confucius. It is also the glory of the Chinese nation that with the sureness of instinct they have unswervingly reverenced as the greatest of their race a man whose one outstanding characteristic was his passion for righteousness. The one most conspicuous among his living disciples in his efforts to revive Confucianism as the State religion speaks of him thus: "Confucius was a great philosopher, a great statesman, a great educator, and a great musician; but above all he was the founder of a great religion." Whether one agrees or not with these assertions, the impression formed by contact with Chinese literature and life is irresistibly that his supremacy has been chiefly due to their recognition of his moral earnestness and its evidential value in his own example. The extravagantly phrased and conventionalized ascriptions, celebrating his virtue as equal to that of Heaven and Earth, which adorn a thousand temples in his honor over all the land are proof of this and of the further significant fact that through him, as the highest and best of men whom they have known, they have persistently sought the reality that lies at the heart of the universe.

As a philosopher Confucius was a pragmatist. The burden upon his soul because of current disorders forced him to think primarily of practical aids to rectifying conduct. For this reason and largely no doubt because of the current attention to magical practices and other harmful superstitions, he avoided metaphysical and speculative subjects. Little could be known of them and they diverted attention from more important issues or were misleading panaceas for ills which must either be stoically endured or avoided by processes of moral education.

None the less he was himself profoundly, if unostentatiously, and—it might almost be said—unavoidably, religious. "Heaven has entrusted me with a mission, what can my enemies do to my life?" He had found in the teaching of the ancients an assured conviction of the moral order regulating the universe and guiding men. His consciousness of his own divine mission sustained him in adversity and was a factor in producing the fresh spiritual energies which broke into the life of his people through him and have been frequently renewed by his disciples in subsequent ages. Of the three things which he once said the ideal man should stand in awe of, one was "the ordinance of Heaven." He was, on the other hand, reluctant to talk about God, immortality, and unseen spiritual issues generally. He undoubtedly felt his ignorance, and confined his teaching within the limits of human behavior, concerning which he felt sure of himself and found his real interest. But many Chinese of to-day do not regard him as agnostic in the Western

sense of being in consequence irreligious. They point out that while reticent on the subject he never denied the existence of God but rather took it for granted. In quiet moments thoughts of spiritual influences outside of human nature stirred within him: "How surpassing great are the powers of the spirits. Looking we cannot see them: listening, we do not hear them; yet they enter into all things, and there is nothing without them."

That he was neither free from faults nor possessed of all wisdom he himself freely recognized. The eulogies of later ages according to him divine attributes and the worship in temples dedicated to his memory are chiefly of interest as indicating how powerful has been his influence and how constant have been the moral enthusiasm and irrepressible religious impulses of Chinese scholars. It is not pertinent to the purpose of this paper to debate his shortcomings. The occasion for bearing witness to Christian faith in China rests on absolute considerations, and is not worthily strengthened by criticizing one of the noblest teachers the world has known.

III. THE EFFECTS OF THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF CONFUCIUS ON CHINESE CHARACTER

IT is by no means easy to estimate the extent to which Chinese habits have been affected by Confucius as against the extent to which he incarnates the distinctive characteristics of his race. Nor is it important for our present study to differentiate between Confucius as himself the effect of the socially inherited opinions and observances of his race, and as the cause which has molded their thinking and fixed their customs through the subsequent centuries. Chinese civilization as it actually exists to-day is in either case the same. Confucius claimed, however, to be only a transmitter of the lore of the ancients, and may not unfairly be regarded as the preëminent teacher who interpreted, exemplified, and gave logical consistency to the forms in which the concepts of his race had long been crystallizing. That, despite many controversies, the essential content of his teaching has been reaffirmed by the greatest thinkers of successive schools of thought, and colors even now the reactions of unlettered peasants and modernized young intellectuals, is evidence of how truly he expressed the genius of his people.

The Confucian system of thought has been admirably summarized by Dr. D. Willard Lyon: "He taught that man must learn to live in harmonious relations with his fellow men; that the basic unit in maintaining such relations must be the family; that the principles which underlie successful relations in the family must also be applied in the larger relations of life; that morality presupposes a moral order in the universe, which, though we know little of it, underlies all our human relations; that to be kept stable, society must have leaders who can be trusted; that the only leaders to be trusted are men of character; that character is to be developed both through education acquired from others and through self-discipline; that no man is a safe leader who goes to extremes; that the right cultivation of his own character for the sake of society must be the chief concern of every leader; that no parent, teacher, or public officer has the right to take lightly his responsibilities for guiding, through precept, rules, and example, the conduct of those who are under him.

"Confucianism is generally acknowledged to be a system of social and political ethics; as such it is chiefly concerned in improving the ethical foundations of the State and in fitting the man who holds office to function effectively as a moral leader. The purely metaphysical element, while not lacking, is kept subordinate. Confucianism has not encouraged empty speculation, but has rather emphasized the practical aspects of political and social life. It has sought solutions for the actual problems confronting the ruler, the subordinate official, the teacher, and the parent. Such solutions

are attempted through clarifying the obligations implied in what are called the five human relations: namely, those existing between ruler and ruled, father and son, brother and brother, husband and wife, friend and friend. So prominent a place have these relations held that many students have come to think of Confucianism as nothing more than an elaborate system of individual and social ethics."

Confucius stressed as no other great moralist in the world ever has the formal observance of rules of conduct because the inner springs of action would thus be restrained or rightly nurtured. This has tended to foster a barren emphasis on externals, a deadening attention to etiquette, an excessive concern over appearances, popularly described as saving or losing face, and an unthinking acceptance of conventionalized morality. But it has also produced a race to whom courtesy is instinctive and the lack of it immoral, who have learned better perhaps than any other the fine art of living together, whose established sanctions have undoubtedly contributed in no slight measure to their high level of social conduct and their endurance as a nation. To the Chinese the way in which a thing is done is usually of far more consequence than the thing that is done. Much in our manner of life must seem to them not only uncouth but inconsiderate and therefore wrong. Even hypocrisy and prevarication are often justified by them as necessary in order to preserve the obviously more important duty of saving face or of avoiding rudely causing pain. How to escape the insincerities, the morality of standardized externals, and the baffling sense of unreality which such an attitude creates, while retaining the gracious amenities of mutual intercourse, is one of the problems for the present generation.

Economics and morals are alike involved in the bearing of custom on the costliness of marriage and funeral ceremonies, social and filial obligations, family claims in conflict with those of public service, or integrity in government office.

It may be confidently asserted that no literature in the world is more free from allusions to sex, more wholesome and elevating in its treatment of relations between men and women, than the Chinese classics. The position accorded women has been more dull but less degrading than is generally supposed. Whether polygamy and concubinage were the best working compromise with masculine appetite in a Confucianized environment is a question that new currents of thought are now provoking, but its prevalence illustrates the tendency to compromise with the facts of existence which is characteristic of Chinese pragmatism. That it has been impotent to eradicate from the masses impurity of thought is evident to any one familiar with the obscenities of the language of abuse. But far more serious is the spread of venereal disease, salacious literature, commercialized vice, radical

theories of sex largely because of contact with the West, in a culture where the ancient standards have been an ineffective antidote.

Confucianism is cursed to-day, by ardent reformers, as the bulwark of conservatism and the barrier to enlightened progress. It is blamed for many of the evils most hateful to young China—absolute monarchy, intellectual bigotry, moral hypocrisy, concubinage, burdensome social requirements. That Confucius himself frankly looked backward to the past for inspiration and imitation may have been due to historical causes or to temperament, but his own example has—not without notable instances of resurgent intellectual vitality—made, on the whole, for a cautious and formalized regimentation alike of thought and practice which is incompatible with modern demands. Many neo-Confucianists, however, while frankly recognizing this, are none the less convinced that the essential principles of their master can be adapted with renewed power to the needs of the present. A Christian Chinese student of philosophy has put it thus: "Some students have condemned Chinese classical literature as dead and aristocratic, not knowing that both its form and content contain elements which possess permanent value not only for China, but for the rest of the world as well. It is an important task of Chinese education to produce scholars who are able to effect a real synthesis, not an external amalgamation, of old and new values, thus creating a genuinely new culture, which, while taking in the best in the new, remains also true to Chinese genius." This synthesis must, he added, be one "that will harmonize personal and moral culture with social service, industrial efficiency, and the study of science."

In this review of the effect of Confucian culture on Chinese character there is the danger of overestimating this particular influence, or of idealizing a social structure as seen in its literature or in the advocacy of its exponents. But it is a remarkable fact that, although learning has been limited to those who had the capacity and the leisure to master a written language difficult because of its ideographic nature, yet the moral discipline it urged has permeated the whole mass. This, at least largely, accounts for their patient cheerfulness and uncomplaining resignation, their tolerance and kindliness, their easy adjustment to human and physical environment, their respect for age and for the man of learning, their fine loyalties in established relationships, even their persistence through centuries and their fecundity as a race. With a patriarchal monarchy they have long had local self-government and social democracy. Mencius taught that the people had the right to rebel against an unworthy ruler, and they have repeatedly exerted it in issues local or national, notably in and since the revolution against the Manchu Dynasty. This explains why public

opinion has been and is now so powerful in a nation without effective political organization or military power.

The really predominant quality of the Chinese race is, however, its interest in moral conduct. We need not ignore the failings and vices which have revealed themselves throughout their long history, nor the degrading realities in the China of to-day, to acknowledge that more than any other race they have specialized in the mutual relations of mankind. Nature has been studied not for material benefit but to bring human life into harmony with the cosmic order. Hence the lack of progress in the physical sciences and that quality in their art which is unconcerned with accurate reproduction of actual landscapes but is forever disclosing the spirit of mountains and streams, of flowers and birds, in terms of the moods of the soul. Confucius gathered up and reaffirmed the lessons from the ancients in a few simple categories of human virtue, and the great literature since produced has been almost entirely occupied with continuing such discussions. The result is that Chinese of all classes—whatever their personal morals—have a capacity for evaluating human motives and actions that is unsurpassed. Despite the recent influx of new attractions from foreign lands this still remains their supreme interest. Young intellectuals are now in a mood of negative criticism of other persons or groups, but it all centers on moral issues and while often caustic and cynical, it is always shrewd. The irony of the present distress in China is that her international humiliation, her political corruption, her economic wretchedness, her social deterioration, and her mass illiteracy, are all fundamentally moral issues, easily to be overcome under a moralized leadership, whereas no people have ever appreciated with clearer insight the importance of character, especially in their leaders, as the true source of prosperity and stable government.

IV. CONFUCIANISM AS A RELIGION

THIS question has frequently been discussed by Western students and is now becoming of interest to some Chinese. The answer depends, of course, on the definition of religion. A distinction must also be observed between the religious concepts or emotions of Confucius himself and the teachings of the School. It is further to be remembered that the Chinese temperament is not analytical, as is ours of theWest, and has never divided life into rigidly labeled compartments. Religion, in so far as they concern themselves with it at all, is felt by them to pervade all human affairs and to be one aspect of reality or man's attitude to it, rather than a particular system of belief based on certain historical occurrences or philosophical reasonings, with their consequent observances and obligations, formulated with precision, and segregated—at least in popular usage—from other interests of life. This explains the anomaly, so puzzling to our departmentalized habits of thought, that not only have the three religions of China, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, lived happily together for many centuries (with brief lapses of imperially commanded intolerance), but countless individual Chinese have practised the rites of each or all as occasion required with no consciousness of incongruity. All three assume the *Tao*, or creating and controlling Way of the Universe, and the impersonal Ultimate from which all things are born, and they respectively meet the varying needs of men to be taken, like medicine, as needed.

There is undeniably a religious element in Confucianism, more pronounced in the earlier writings, less so in the doctrines of Confucius himself. Whatever the cause of his own reticence, the result has been religious degeneration into a cult for the learned, surviving in an agnostic and therefore hungrily superstitious world. The God-idea of the classics, in many ways so noble, instead of being clarified, grew vague and chilly, dwindling into the ambiguous term *T'ien* or Heaven, which by the time of Chu Hsi and the Sung Dynasty had become merely the depersonalized moral principle of Nature. This ancient conception of *Shang Ti*, or the Supreme Ruler, thus failed to extricate itself from the clamant polytheism of the people and to parallel the vitalizing monotheism of the Old Testament. There was, however, one thinker at least in ancient China who conceived quite definitely of a Supreme Being and who argued at length not only that He should be worshiped, but that obedience to Him and imitation of His unrestricted beneficence requires the practice of universal love. It is significant that Motzu (Mo Ti), long regarded as a heretic in orthodox Confucianism, is now being studied with newly awakened attention.

But in the paragraphs of this paper, as in the age-long stretches of Con-

fucian practice, there constantly recurs its ethical emphasis. If a religion at all, it is a religion of humanism with adumbrations never wholly dissolved from view of spiritual cravings and comforts. Says the *Book of Rites:* "The practice of right living is deemed the highest art; that of any other is lower. Complete virtue takes first place; the doing of anything else whatever is secondary." In the glowing insight of Confucius this found supreme expression in *Jen* which he himself defined as: "When desiring to stand to enable others to stand; when desiring to attain to enable others to attain." The Golden Rule taught negatively by him on other occasions here finds positive expression. It reminds one of Pope's couplet described by Ruskin as being the finest statement of moral purpose in the English language:

"Never elated while one man's oppressed;
Never dejected while another's blest."

Jen is the one essential attribute of the ideal man. That this consists in love, or fellow-feeling and consequent effort to help, reveals the essentially humanitarian motive of the Confucian ethic. It is reinforced by the word *Shu*, or Reciprocity, which is the negative aspect of *Jen*, and is more subjective in comparing the heart or action of others with one's own, thus prompting to considerate treatment and forgiving tolerance of others. When taken in connection with his declarations about World Brotherhood (*Ta T'ung*) the splendid breadth of the great humanist compels respect. That his world had narrow geographical bounds does not vitiate the universalism of his concept. As to the unseen realities he is reserved but reverently so. "God exists, but He remains the Unknowable," writes a thoughtful Chinese Christian after questioning a list of typical living scholars. "This is the creed of Confucianism. The first part makes you glow with pleasant anticipation of the wonderful vistas of spiritual insight that may be opened to you, but the second part slams the door right to and you are face to face with a solid stone wall. This stone wall of agnosticism is more difficult to surmount than open hostility, because the agnostic is always self-satisfied." And the practical fruition of classical agnosticism in the intelligentsia of to-day is atheism and naturalism freely avowed or practically accepted.

V. ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND WORSHIP OF CONFUCIUS

ANCESTOR worship is of interest as illustrating in high lights the utilitarian ethic and religious skepticism of Confucianism with their sociological and superstitious consequences. It probably came down from primitive times as the correlate of emphasis on the family and reverence for the aged, perpetuated by dim hopes or fears of immortality. The ceremonies had become grossly materialized, but Confucius felt their social value too highly to be willing to discard them. They served as the bond of union in the social order and were the crowning feature in filial piety, loyalty to the sovereign, and other cardinal virtues in the Confucian system. He therefore urged their observance, as in the case of the gods or spirits, as though they were present. Mencius, who apparently did not believe in the existence of spirits, since they are not mentioned in his writings, none the less stressed ritual observances for the dead even more than did his master. Hsün Tzu sought to eliminate all superstition from the life of scholars, and urged that human nature, though evil, could be educated into goodness. He, more than his predecessors, all of whom agreed as to the goodness of man by nature, felt the moral and social effectiveness of maintaining burial and sacrificial ceremonies, and rationalized the practice by explaining that they were not for the sake of the dead but for the living. For those who understood his interpretation they ceased to have any idolatrous or even religious significance, and as this became widely accepted in subsequent teaching it is not surprising that the Emperor K'ang-hsi literally meant it when he informed the Jesuits at his court that ancestor worship was in no sense a religious rite. To the Western missionary, because of its outward forms and the confusion in the use of the word *pai*, which may mean indifferently the paying of respects or the performance of worship, it has always seemed idolatrous, and such it has been in popular effect. But it represents a persistent belief in the immortality of the clan, if not of the individual, and enshrines the sense of the continuity of life with its reciprocal duties. It gratifies the dying wishes of loved ones and gives an outlet for grief. It has preserved the feeling of reverence and the resolution to live worthily of the departed and has been a deterrent to misdoing. The real objection to ancestor worship is that it creates in the minds of the worshipers the value of God for the spirits of the dead, and thus blurs the religious relation which each soul should have to God alone.

The instinct which has led to the worship of Confucius and the rational interpretation of it among the *literati* who have revered him as the glorified spiritual ancestor of their class is essentially the same. As a matter of

THE LIBRARY
Union Theological Seminary
RICHMOND, VA.

fact, popular idolatry springs largely from the same urge. The idols are chiefly ancient sage-kings or hero-patriots, or men, and one woman, who have been benefactors of humanity, notably the Buddha and his disciples. The connection on the one hand with ancestor worship and on the other with ethical humanism is obvious.

VI. CONFUCIANISTS' DIFFICULTIES IN THEIR APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY

THESE develop naturally out of their own racial heritage. The fact that Christianity has come to them in foreign forms of thought and ritual observance has been pecularily an obstacle to a people whose religion has been so completely integrated with their life. This was aggravated at the outset by their proud ignorance of other lands as it is now by their passionate nationalism. The insistence on theological dogmas which seem to Chinese skepticism difficult of objective proof and to Chinese pragmatism of slight ethical meaning is frequently urged. The emphasis on sin as inherent clashes against their traditional acceptance of the doctrine that human nature is originally good but is corrupted by its contacts, and related to this is the Confucian reliance on self-discipline through education and the beneficial effects of just government and proper social relations as against regenerating influences from a superhuman source. Future reward as an incentive to righteous or religious living is scorned as inferior to the teaching of their own sages that virtue is its own reward. The mystic relation of the soul to God is regarded by some Chinese Christians as perhaps the greatest obstacle, and to this might be added the more general one of what is in their view a disproportionate absorption with the divine rather than the human aspects of life. The number and variety of denominations and the controversy, rivalry, and mutual intolerance among them have proved sorely perplexing. The moral laxity, social injustice, materialism, and at least passive acceptance of military force in so-called Christian lands is the subject of humiliating comment. Modern science has given a new assurance to the ancient rationalism of China in regard to the miraculous elements in the Scriptures and the deity of Jesus, to say nothing of the validity of any religious experience. The apparent lack of filial respect on the part of Jesus, especially in His treatment of His mother at Cana of Galilee, has a force that only Chinese can feel. They fear the obscurantist attitude to scientific thought and to social reforms, the bitterness of theological controversy, and the readiness of Christians to go to war even against one another, which they are taught to believe from the history of Europe and America is inescapable in institutionalized Christianity.

VII. POINTS OF CONTACT

CONFUCIANISM assumes that there is a Supreme Power, orderly and beneficent, which controls the universe and the destiny of man. There is a real if not commonly felt causal connection between this belief and the basic relationship in the Confucian ethic, between that of father and son. The distinctive note in the revelation of Jesus is the Fatherhood of God and the consequent meaning of this for men. As Mr. E. R. Hughes has put it:

"Of all the religions there are only two at the heart of which lies the principle of filial piety. One of these is Confucianism; the other is Christianity. Of the former the unprejudiced observer has to admit that, however out of perspective it may be, it is yet extraordinarily near to the truth of the matter. Its founders may, as Dr. Hu Shih convincingly shows, have been false to their great master. In that case, whilst what they builded may have been worse than they knew, yet most certainly it was also better. Behind the relation of parent and child lies the creation of human life, the given fact of the family, at once homely and mysterious. Most religions, if not all, show that behind them lies a response to this fact. But in the case of other religions so often it was the marital relation which intrigued men's interest; so much so that often enough religion has been pander to lust. The Confucianist would have none of this, though he knew the meaning of romance (cf. *The Book of Poetry*). He was after something more permanent, more trustworthy, than sex passion could give him. Therefore the child had to come in. Again, worship of motherhood has led some people along the path of gyneolatry. The Confucianist went beyond that. The mother had her place as deity, but that place was alongside the father. Remember, too, that behind and beyond the family was Heaven and that dim figure, *Shang Ti*. So Confucianism dug its roots into the concrete reality in and behind the universe. It may be accused of making man in the image of God; yet there is much to be said for the argument that this was one stage nearer the truth of it all than making God in the image of man."

What is of the very essence of the teaching of Jesus, however, and the only possible explanation of His own life, the presence and power of the fatherly God, is at most shadowy and remote suggestion with Confucius. In testifying to the elements Christianity can contribute to Confucianism, Chinese Christians usually mention first a clearer, completer knowledge of God from personal experience. One of the oldest living Christians who had in his youth mastered the classical scholarship goes so far as to say that "Confucianism contains all the essential ideas of Christianity except the

idea of God." Or as a younger one states the difference: "Confucian ethics has a naturalistic basis. To Christianize China is to change the very basis of its morality, to substitute a personal God, the Father of Jesus and of all men, for the impersonal, and at the best, pantheistic nature. In other words, the problem is, how to give Chinese morality a new soul."

It is probably fair to summarize the views of Chinese Christians as to the Confucian concept of God by saying that while inadequate it is not incompatible with the Christian one, and that the underlying assumptions about Heaven and *Shang Ti* can be enriched and vitalized until they connote the Heavenly Father of Jesus.

Confucianism and Christianity are at one in recognizing the primary importance of personal character, and in each instance the master himself has ever been the best example of his own teaching. Not only so but each has defined character in terms of man's relation to his fellows. The Gospel of Christ will commend itself to the Chinese mind in so far as it furnishes fresh inspiration and potency to ethical ideals. Islâm and Brahmanism may have emphasized religion at the expense of righteousness. The Chinese are religiously indifferent but ethically alert. They think in terms of man, not of God; of cosmic processes, not of personal deity. Religious ceremonial is only of use in the social control of the unenlightened masses. If, therefore, they can discover in the Christian doctrine of God and in union with Him through spiritual culture an unmistakable and hitherto unknown dynamic for right living, they will accept it in the terms that they best understand.

It may seem that Confucianism as based on philosophical materialism must repudiate the spiritual elements in the Christian ethic. As a matter of fact, not a few of them fear the impact of Western materialism upon a civilization from which the ancient sanctions have largely perished, and seek new spiritual energies with which to rescue and reinvigorate their treasured heritage. The two following quotations from President Lim Boom Keng, of Amoy University, are illuminating as evidence that Chinese are not forced into conflicting camps by verbal antitheses, but will claim as allies any who strive for the same objectives whatever their philosophy:

"The Confucianists are endeavoring to restate the case for Confucianism in the light of modern knowledge. In this renaissance Confucianism finds itself happily in a much sounder position than that of any other religion. (1) Its theology is purely rationalistic and is not vitiated by any obsolete creed based on any alleged revelation. (2) Its system of ethics is founded primarily on the fundamental relations of mankind, and is wholly deduced from the principles of filial piety and altruism, subject to revision at any time by altered political or intellectual conditions. (3) It recognizes the

need of science in the furtherance of knowledge. (4) It bases its philosophy entirely upon reason and logic. (5) Its politics is the application of the law of love for the government of mankind, and is not inconsistent with all the demands of the new democracy. Thus neo-Confucianism, despite its temporary set-back through the fall of Mandarin Classicism, is a clear advance, and may claim to be the kind of religion most suitable to our age, not only in China but throughout the world. It is socialistic and democratic, without being too idealistic, and yet it combines a sane pragmatism with an absolute conviction in the truth of the Immanence of the Divine Spirit in the world."

"Is it not possible for the Christian missions, with their prestige, their influence, their wealth, and their opportunities, to take part in this mighty work of reconciliation, and to save the wreckage of the oldest human civilization from the ravages of a cruel and senseless nihilistic revolution, that respects neither man nor God?"

VIII. THE HEART OF THE MATTER

THE incentive to Christian missionary enterprise is personal experience of Jesus Christ and the conviction that a similar experience is possible for men of all races and will result for them in essentially the same ethical and spiritual benefits. From the nature of the case this missionary impulse can be appreciated only by those who have shared in the experience. But for all such it has absolute values. We welcome all the spiritual intuition or ethical enthusiasm that may have come through any of the world's great seers or sages as part of "the light that lighteth every man coming into the world." We seek to blend the Christian experience with any such racial heritage, believing that the resultant gain to all will be the greater. We well know that the revelation of God through Christ is sublimely satisfying and sufficient, but we gladly if humbly anticipate that the special emphases of oriental culture will bring fresh understanding of Him and help us to correct or supplement our own incomplete appreciation of His transcending greatness. It might once have seemed that Confucian China had its own solution of life's moral and religious problems and needed nothing from us. Even then the love that experience of Christ ought to generate would demand that we share, in the spirit of unselfish service, the best of all that we have to give with the people of China in this their time of crucial need, trusting that by such efforts some of them may become convinced of the transforming power of Christian faith and seek in turn to share it with their fellows. But this need no longer be the appeal. This paper has been written not from theory nor even in the main from Western experience. Most of the comments on Confucian culture, especially as related to the Christian evangel, have been learned from Chinese Christians, whose sense of its superlative importance for their own people is made more joyous and convincing because of their experience alike of Confucian ideals and of Christian realities. Their radiant testimony has colored all that is written in these pages and constitutes for the writer the most enlightening and exhilarating inducement to continued missionary service. The following self-revelation in a personal letter written by one of them within the past few months is a comforting evidence of the receptivity to Christian influences of Chinese saturated with Confucian idealism:

"We have been hearing, not perhaps without a measure of patience, that we must interpret Christianity in terms of Chinese culture. There is a good deal in it. But what we really need is a thorough understanding of the teachings of Jesus, and a direct experience of Christ, through a living of His kind of life. The Christian message is clearly far above what Confucius can offer and what his followers can give. Mankind wants God.

My personal opinion is that God can be found in clear expression only in the Lord incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest task ahead, it seems to me, is a creating of the direct experience of God through our faith in Christ. The Christian message lies clearly in the definite faith in God as Father, with whom His believing children can have personal communion through the living of a life as exemplified in Jesus, a life of moving and conquering love. It is clear that Confucius has not given us a gospel, a simple yet magnificent gospel, of the love of God the Father, who wants us all to be like Christ, and to have the most abundant life, that contains in it a wonderful peace and joy and a contact with everlasting reality."

Another wrote as follows shortly before his death: "My opinion is that if Christianity . . . is to be naturalized in China, its forms, organizations, and theologies must undergo a thorough modification and correction. . . . But when we take the teachings of Christ and His life and view them in their totality we find in them eternal values. He lived and was merciful and sympathetic, suffering for those that suffer, and, as He was nailed upon the cross, dying for mankind, His compassionate and sorrowing love went deeply into the heart of man. His dying prayer was a petition to God to forgive His enemies, manifesting a broad toleration which has since been the source of man's inspiration. Such a romantic spirit met a need and supplemented the prevalent Greek civilization, and in our own time and country, not only compares favorably with love and benevolence as taught by Mo Ti, Mencius, Confucius, and the philosophers of the Sung and the Ming dynasties, but also fulfils their teachings and extends it to practical affairs. . . . Most of our people are selfish and so there are exceeding few who pay any attention to the social welfare. There are even people who cover up their selfishness, calculating and fighting their fellow men in their thoughts and disguising their dangerous and poisonous spirit in the cloak of respectability. They virtually cut their life off from the life of others. Nothing but compassionate and pitying love can save us from such a state of affairs and from such a type of life. And such a love is the sole and absolute contribution of the Christian religion."

The Confucian literature can nobly supplement the Old Testament in leading its students to Christ and helping them to interpret Him according to their racial genius, as Plato did for the Graeco-Roman world. Even for the Western mind it brings renewed confidence in the supremacy of the One who in the midst of bitter contradictions moved steadily on in His unshaken confidence that at the heart of things reigns Love and that Love will triumph in the end. In the strength of His example we have the courage to trust the reality of His faith, and to look up as did He, to find the face of God. In the Cross of Christ we see revealed the very heart of the

Eternal and we know the secret of the universe. The sages of China had intimations of such mysteries and lived bravely in their sustaining light. But no other person of whom history tells can help men to such an adventure of faith with its confirming experience as He has helped them. He leads us to God and in ethical perfection incarnate such as the Chinese should of all men best appreciate He reveals the qualities of the unseen God and the scarcely less dimly recognized potentialities of human nature when quickened by His Spirit. The Chinese tradition fits them peculiarly to appropriate Him to themselves. In their troubled ferment of change they need the very potencies which He lived and died that men might have. The plant is already taking root in the rich soil of Chinese intellectual and ethical inheritance, but it is very tender and slight. It must be carefully nurtured and reproduced throughout that vast population. In considerations such as these lies the quivering challenge to serve with better methods learned by contact, and in ways that make for the highest welfare, the race that produced and has ever since reverenced Confucius.